

# GetConnected!

## Metroparks of the Toledo Area **2010 Annual Report**



# Weathering the Storm

June 5, 2010 was a night northwest Ohioans will long remember.

Tornadoes tore through the area, causing the deaths of seven people, leaving numerous families without homes and one community without its high school.

It was memorable, too, for the way the community came together to help those impacted in northern Wood County and western Lucas County.

The storm's effects on Metroparks pale in comparison to those devastating losses, but the tornado left a scar on the park system, too.

Oak Openings Preserve – the largest Metropark by far – was in the path of the storm. The next morning, most visitors would barely recognize parts of the preserve, where thousands of trees were uprooted or sheared off, limbs were strewn across a 150-acre area, and debris was heaped on roads and trails.

Fortunately, there were no scouts camping at the Scout Camp, which was destroyed by the tornado. There were scouts camping at the Spring-

brook Camp, but rangers warned them to leave before a second storm arrived. It was also fortunate that most of the guests at a wedding reception at Oak Openings Lodge had already gone for the evening before the tornado arrived. There were no injuries, but fallen trees had to be cleared before the last of the guests could leave the parking lot.

After the storm, the work began. Our crews were there first thing the next morning to begin removing debris.

Our land management staff, which was already dealing with the fallout of emerald ash borer, had the difficult task of overseeing a massive removal of thousands of dead or severely damaged trees.

In December – six months after the tornado – staff and volunteers finished clearing debris from the region's only dedicated cross-country ski trail, just one day before the first significant snowfall of the season!

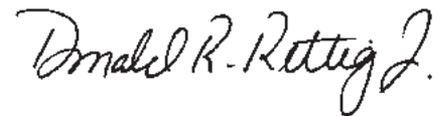
I want to thank the Oak Openings staff, the members of our Land Management and Operations Departments, our amazing volunteers,

park neighbors and visitors for their work, support, understanding and patience during this lengthy and difficult project.

The same can be said about other aspects of the park system. Despite economic challenges that continue to face our region, Metroparks remains focused and dedicated to providing the residents of Lucas County with a high-quality clean, safe, natural area park system.

Through tough times – and even tornadoes - the Metroparks community pulls through because of a shared desire to protect the natural treasures entrusted to our agency for future generations to enjoy.

Regards,



Donald R. Rettig Jr.  
Director

*Members of the Land Management crew: Tim Gallaher, Penny Wagner, LaRae Sprow, Steve Leffel, Jason Diver, Kyle Robison, Mike Ohlrich and Dave Disbrow.*





Tim Schetter, land management and acquisition manager, explores one of the properties in the Oak Openings Corridor, a major focus of the park district's acquisition effort.

## Land Management

Land management refers to stewardship of the land, such as restoring natural areas by removing invasive, non-native plant species, and planting native varieties when appropriate. It also involves other techniques, such as prescribed fires, to maintain habitats that have deteriorated because natural processes have been interrupted by manmade factors.

The big story in land management in 2010 had to do with safety.

Safety of park visitors was the primary concern after the spring tornado at Oak Openings (see introduction).

Safety is also the focus of an ongoing emerald ash borer project begun in January 2010 with funding from a \$1.3 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant. The emerald ash borer is an Asian beetle that has infested most of Ohio, killing all species of ash. Tens of thousands of dead ash trees throughout the Metroparks are now dying, and those within 100 feet of trails, roads and buildings pose a potential hazard to people or property. These "hazard trees" are being removed at all the parks, particularly Pearson and Oak Openings.

Another phase of the ARRA project will involve planting thousands of tree seedlings and research that will be useful to other areas of the country as the destructive beetles continue to spread.

## Connecting With The Land

### Land Acquisition

Metroparks grew by 171 acres in 2010. Most of the land acquired was within the Oak Openings region, where a greenway corridor between Secor and Oak Openings Preserve is more than 85 percent complete.

In 2010 Metroparks acquired:

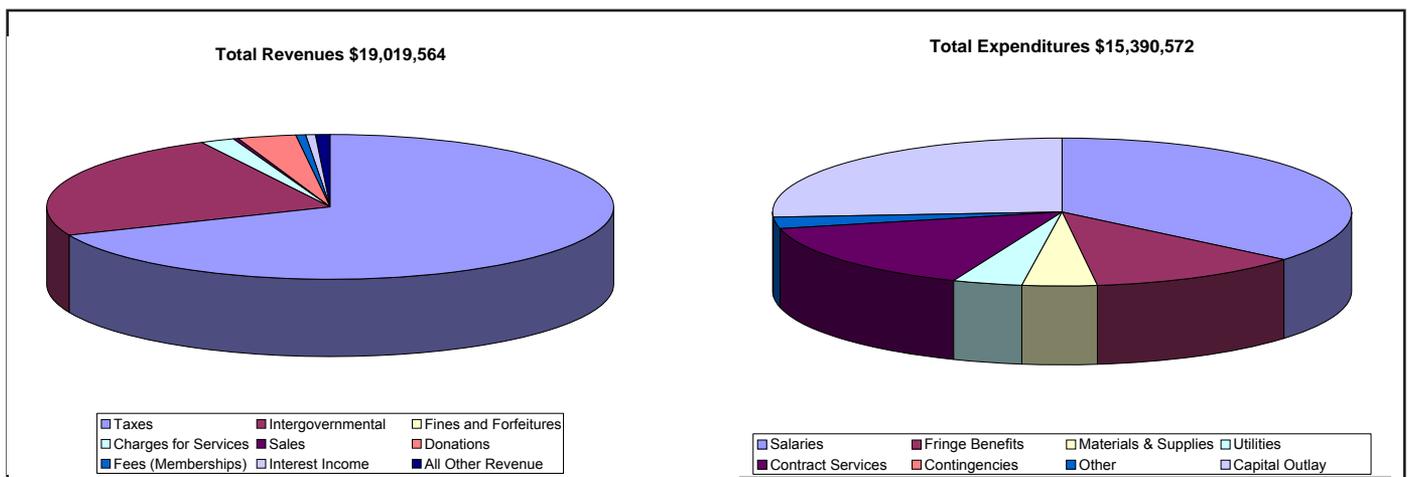
- 143 acres of Oak Openings habitat using more than \$1 million from the Clean Ohio Fund.
- A 16-acre restored wetland transferred from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.
- 10 acres of wet prairie and swamp forest habitat purchased with \$80,500 from the Ohio EPA's Water Resource Restoration Sponsor Program in collaboration with the City of Toledo.

- Two acres adjacent to the Fallen Timbers Battlefield on Jerome Road.

### Closing In On 11,000 Acres

Since the passage of a 10-year, 0.3-mill land levy in 2002, the park district has added 3,108 acres. Total land holdings (owned, leased or managed by agreement) were 10,953 acres as of December 31, 2010. Following are total acres acquired by focus area. Numbers in parentheses represent Metroparks original acreage targets.

Zone	(Acres)	Total
Oak Openings Corridor	(1800)	1724
Lake Erie Coastal Zone Area	(1600)	987
Maumee River Corridor/ Fallen Timbers	(350)	69
Ottawa River/ Ten Mile Creek Corridor	(250)	0
Swan Creek Corridor/ Westside Corridor	(200)	5
Other: Nona France, Keil Farm	(300)	323
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(4500)</b>	<b>3108</b>



Consider making planned giving one of your Metroparks connections.

## Connecting With The Community

### Programs And Special Events

Providing a positive visitor experience ranks highly with members of the community and park users. Providing free school outreach programs and visitor education in the form of nature walks and nature education for kids also are priorities with those surveyed. These data, collected through telephone, in-person and online surveys, represent program user interests.

A major emphasis in recent years has been a series of summer camps, including Nature Camp. Weeks were expanded in 2010 to include more age groups. Additional camps targeting age groups and special interests have been added for 2011.

The National Center for Nature Photography at Secor, which marked its fifth anniversary in 2010, is growing in popularity with well-attended gallery exhibits and opening receptions, and capacity attendance at workshops. The Center has also reached into the community with special exhibits at venues such as Main Branch Library in downtown Toledo and The Andersons corporate offices in Maumee. The Center continues as a gallery and will also be used as a unique public rental venue for special receptions, exhibits and small parties.

The Canal Experience at Providence had 13,300 visitors in 2009. The historical attraction takes visitors back to 1876 when canal boats were an important form of transportation. Ticket sales for the boat generated \$58,000 to help offset the cost of operating the historical attraction. The new canal season started strong in 2010 with 2,270 reservations in May, including 1,800 children.

### Volunteers

More than 43,000 volunteer hours helped keep the Metroparks clean, safe and natural in 2010. Volunteers included individuals and families; organizations such as KeyBank; and schools such as St. Ursula Academy, Maumee Valley Country Day School and the Knight Academy. Volunteers

### Meet Our VIPs

Volunteers In Parks was formed in 1998 as an outgrowth of Citizens For Metroparks, the group that helped pass the levy to purchase the Stranahan estate (now Wildwood Preserve) in 1974. Since then, VIPs have been involved in a variety of fundraising activities for Metroparks.

Over the last 12 years, the VIPs have raised over \$50,000! These funds have been used to purchase everything from trees to portable sound systems, and binoculars to bicycles for park rangers and maintenance staff. While most of the VIP's fundraising activities are at Wildwood, their support is not limited to one park. A recent example of their contributions is the colorful banners in the parking lots at several Metroparks.

Volunteers In Parks principal fundraisers are pancake breakfasts in June and September at Wildwood, and the Holiday Café and Craft Show during Holidays in the Manor House.



*Volunteers In Parks President Bill Leddy and Secretary Penny Reder.*

gave over 2,700 hours of their time to the Holidays in the Manor House event alone, an increase over last year.

Volunteer Trail Patrol hours also continue to increase. These dedicated volunteers who walk the trails and assist park visitors contributed just over 10,000 hours, a new record!

The year also saw increases in the number of volunteer hours in support of nature education, including Walk Leaders and Program Assistants, as well as species monitors, including the Breeding Raptor Program led by volunteer Steve Lauer.

Another category of volunteers is made up of students from area universities who can be seen in and

around the parks gaining real world experience while giving back to the community.

Friends of Pearson, Side Cut, Secor and the Lathrop House continued to make significant contributions to their areas of interest, including financial and in-kind donations as well as advocacy for the parks and projects. Volunteers in Parks make contributions in support of projects and supplies requested by the staff.

Members of the Volunteer Trail Patrol began performing trail audits throughout the park district in the second half of 2010. They contributed 102 hours, walking trails and sharing their observations with the maintenance staff to help improve the trails for park visitors.

## Communications

The expanding role of social media in the field of communications has been a boon to Metroparks. On Facebook, more than 11,000 people now follow the park district, using the website to receive daily notifications about programs and highlights in nature, posting their own comments and photos, asking questions and interacting with other Metroparks fans. Metroparks-Toledo.com, launched in late 2009, has been updated to include new social media tools that make it easier than ever to share and comment on content.

The MyMetroparks campaign, begun in 2010, invites people to share their experiences in the Metroparks. Their words, pictures and videos are collected at MyMetroparks.com and shared on Facebook and Twitter.

In 2011, marketing will highlight the attributes of each of the Metroparks to invite people to explore new parks and park areas they may not know about.

## Connecting With The Future

### Development

Development funds include membership, donations of both cash and in-kind services, grants, memorials, honorariums and bequests.

Donor Connection events in 2010 expanded outreach to both existing and new Metropark supporters, creating greater awareness of park district fundraising needs. Quarterly member receptions, which were very successful in 2010, will continue in 2011.

### Fundraising/Memberships

Many local foundations and businesses made generous gifts to Metroparks in 2010. Their support allows the park district to provide facilities and services above and beyond what traditional funding would allow. The following examples highlight just a few of them.

Membership increased to more than 1,900. The member retention rate, including the return of more than 100 lapsed members, was 78 percent,

which is considered exceptional by industry standards.

Money raised from Memberships fund a wide variety of projects. In 2010, \$50,000 in members grants was awarded to projects identified by staff, including \$10,000 toward the development of the new sledding hill at Side Cut. Other projects included life jackets for the canal boat at Providence, walking bridge replacements at Oak Openings, a photography exhibit at Secor, hand dryers and safety lighting at Wildwood and more.

### Foundation and Corporate Support

Many local foundations and businesses made generous gifts to Metroparks in 2010. Their support allows the park district to provide facilities and services above and beyond what traditional funding would allow.

**The Andersons:** Metroparks has had the very good fortune to have an ongoing relationship with one of the region's most familiar family names – The Andersons. Annual, significant gifts from The Andersons, Inc. have supported a wide variety of special events, educational programs, outreach efforts and other initiatives.

**Stranahan Foundation:** Stranahan is a name that is inseparable from Metroparks history. A recent, large gift from the foundation paid for a new heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system at the Manor House, which was once a Stranahan family estate.

**Edward Lamb Foundation:** Metroparks received a significant gift to support a new interpretive historical sign project at Side Cut Metropark. The project will feature a new interpretive, self-guided tour through visual and audio devices located throughout Side Cut that will highlight both the historical significance and the natural features of this unique area.

**France Stone Foundation:** Metroparks has received a number of grant awards from this foundation over a long giving history, including support for Providence Metropark, The Canal Experience at Providence and most recently for the Middlegrounds project.

**Toledo Rotary Foundation:** Funded by the members of the Rotary Club of Toledo and their fundraising efforts, this foundation provides dollars to support local and international projects, especially programs for children and children's health.

*Ranger Tyrone Tyson with Gloria and Spud Remy. The Remys are among those Metroparks Members who have taken advantage of the Ride With A Ranger benefit, available to those who join at higher levels. Spud and Gloria are long-time members who said they enjoyed their ride-along experience at Oak Openings Preserve so much last year they plan to ride again this year at a different Metropark.*



**Consider making planned giving one of your Metroparks connections.**



*The Wagener Sledding Hill at Side Cut could not have opened in a better year, with above average snowfall – and lots of happy sledders! It also could not have opened without the creativity and hard work of the Side Cut staff, including Bob Heckman, Tyler Lehman and Jim Shaw.*

**Carson Family Metroparks Fund:**

The Carson Family Metroparks Fund, through the Toledo Community Foundation, recently committed a significant gift to Metroparks to further the restoration of the historical Ellen Bidle Shipman garden at the Wildwood Manor House. The initial phases of the project were also funded through the Carson Family Metroparks Fund in 2008. Support from the foundation's most recent gift will complete the project.

**Alfred Wagener Foundation:** Brent Wagener, a son of Al, approached Metroparks with the idea of doing a "little family golf outing" in memory of their dad and to support Side Cut Metropark. At the time, Brent said, "We don't know how long we can do this or even if we would raise much money, but would Metroparks be interested?" Twelve years later, Side Cut has a new sledding hill that opened to large and appreciative crowds this winter. The Wagener golf outing has grown to become an annual event that provides thousands of dollars. By agreement with the family, the funds will now be committed to support the new winter recreation area.

A generous donation from the Metroparks Members was used to finish the sledding hill project, which opened in time for the start of a snowy winter.

**Tiffany Elise Staelin Fund.** This fund was established by Steve and Penny Staelin in memory of their daughter, Tiffany. The Staelins have supported the outside renovation of the Visitors Center at Wildwood, including Tiffany's Butterfly Garden. A recent commitment of a significant gift through this fund will support the renovation of the trailhead area behind the Visitors Center.

**BP-Husky:** the BP-Husky Refinery in Oregon has been a major supporter of Metroparks, and Pearson Metropark in particular. In late 2010, the company made a donation to renovate the Window on Wildlife at Pearson, a project that was completed in the first quarter of 2011. The donation also helped plant trees at Swan Creek Preserve, where trees have been lost because of the emerald ash borer.

**Significant Bequests**

In 2010, Metroparks was honored to be the beneficiary of several

bequests from individuals who loved Metroparks and provided for the park district through their planned gifts.

- Michael Gospodarek
- Prudence Lamb Trust
- Nayland C. Rose Trust
- Jane M. Rose Trust
- John and Virginia Hankison Foundation

Bequests are a way to leave a legacy and support the community. Please consider making Metroparks a beneficiary when making your estate plans.

**Customer Service**

The Metz Visitors Center at Wildwood got a major makeover in 2010. Restorations to the impressive former stables building include the addition of a public locker area called The Nest, a refreshed Window on Wildlife and numerous improvements to the courtyard. A rear patio area and landscaping will be completed in 2011, along with improvements to the nearby trailhead.

Another significant change was moving the Customer Service Department to the Visitors Center and expanding open hours seasonally. The new office is one-stop shopping for Metroparks program and facility reservations. Staff there can help customers plan events from family reunions to weddings, as well as offering brochures and other information about all of the parks.

The renovated Farmhouse at the east entrance to Wildwood provides another rental option, and the addition of air conditioning at Oak Openings Lodge is expected to increase the use of that facility. In 2011, the Buehner Center at Oak Openings will be turned into a rental facility, while improvements at buildings in Pearson, Swan Creek and Side Cut are expected to increase rentals in each of these parks.

Rentals of picnic shelters exceeded the goal in 2010, generating nearly \$183,000. Over 98 percent of renters said they would rent a Metroparks facility again.

Less than two years since Metroparks began offering the Manor House as a unique wedding venue, many couples have chosen the 32-room mansion to

be the site of their special day. The park district sees this as an area for considerable growth in coming years. In 2010, Manor House rentals generated more than \$26,000 in sales.

## The Year Ahead

Projects scheduled for 2011 include improvements to the Yager Center at Swan Creek, the Buehner Center at Oak Openings, Macomber Lodge at Pearson and the Lamb Center at Side Cut.

The Yager Center will undergo interior and exterior renovations, including the addition of a warming kitchen. Accessible restrooms will be added at Macomber, a popular rental facility. Buehner will become a rental facility with a warming kitchen and new restrooms. Interior and exterior renovations are planned for the Lamb Center at Side Cut, which saw improvements in 2010 as well.

Phase II of renovations to the historic Lathrop House at Sylvania's Harroun Park will also be under way this year. The project is funded by a state grant and Friends of the Lathrop House. Metroparks has been assisting Friends and the local community by providing project management at the historic home, which played a role in the Underground Railroad.

### **Other projects slated for this year include:**

- Road and parking lot sealing and trail maintenance, including two bridges, at various Metroparks.
- Park bench, drinking fountain and picnic table replacement throughout the Metroparks.
- Interior improvements to the maintenance shops at Swan Creek and Providence, and exterior work on the maintenance garage at Farnsworth.
- Masonry repairs to chimneys at the Wildwood Manor House.
- Renovations to the playground shelter at Pearson.

## Old Farmhouse Is New Rental Space

A charming farmhouse that stands at the east entrance to Wildwood Preserve is the park system's newest rental facility. In the fall, the building, which formerly housed a gift shop, was opened for public use by reservation. The Farmhouse is ideal for small gatherings of up to 50 people.



## Bend View Shelter Has New Access

A new entrance to Bend View Metropark makes the Waterville park more accessible. Until now, Bend View and its picturesque view of a 90-degree bend in the Maumee River could be reached only by walking 2 miles from neighboring Farnsworth on the Towpath Trail. It now has a separate entrance from the Anthony Wayne Trail, a parking lot and a connector leading to the trail and a WPA stone shelter, which is available for rent.



## Connect With Your Metroparks

Enjoy them. Protect them.

Let them live forever through your designated or planned gift.

Please contact us at  
419-407-9716.



**METROPARKS  
TOLEDO AREA**  
*Your Clean, Safe, Natural Places To Be*  
MetroparksToledo.com

**Consider making planned giving one of your Metroparks connections.**

## To Preserve and Protect the Natural Heritage of Northwest Ohio



### Board of Commissioners

Scott J. Savage, *President*

Fritz Byers, *Vice President*

Lera L. Doneghy, *Vice President*

### Mission

To enhance quality of life and inspire preservation efforts in this and future generations by providing a regional system of premier natural, historical and cultural parklands maintained and operated to the highest professional standards.

### Your Metroparks

Each of the Metroparks offers picnic areas, playfields, trails for hiking and cross-country skiing, interpretive information and natural beauty. Each also offers something that makes it unique.

### Parks:

Wildwood Preserve, Sylvania Township  
Pearson, Oregon

Swan Creek Preserve, Toledo  
Side Cut, Maumee

Oak Openings Preserve, Swanton  
Farnsworth, Waterville

Bend View, Waterville

Providence, Grand Rapids

Secor, Berkey

Blue Creek Conservation Area, Whitehouse

Fallen Timbers Battlefield, Maumee

### Affiliates & Attractions:

Toledo Botanical Garden, Toledo

The Manor House, Wildwood

Oak Grove School, Wildwood

The Canal Experience, Providence

National Center for Nature Photography, Secor

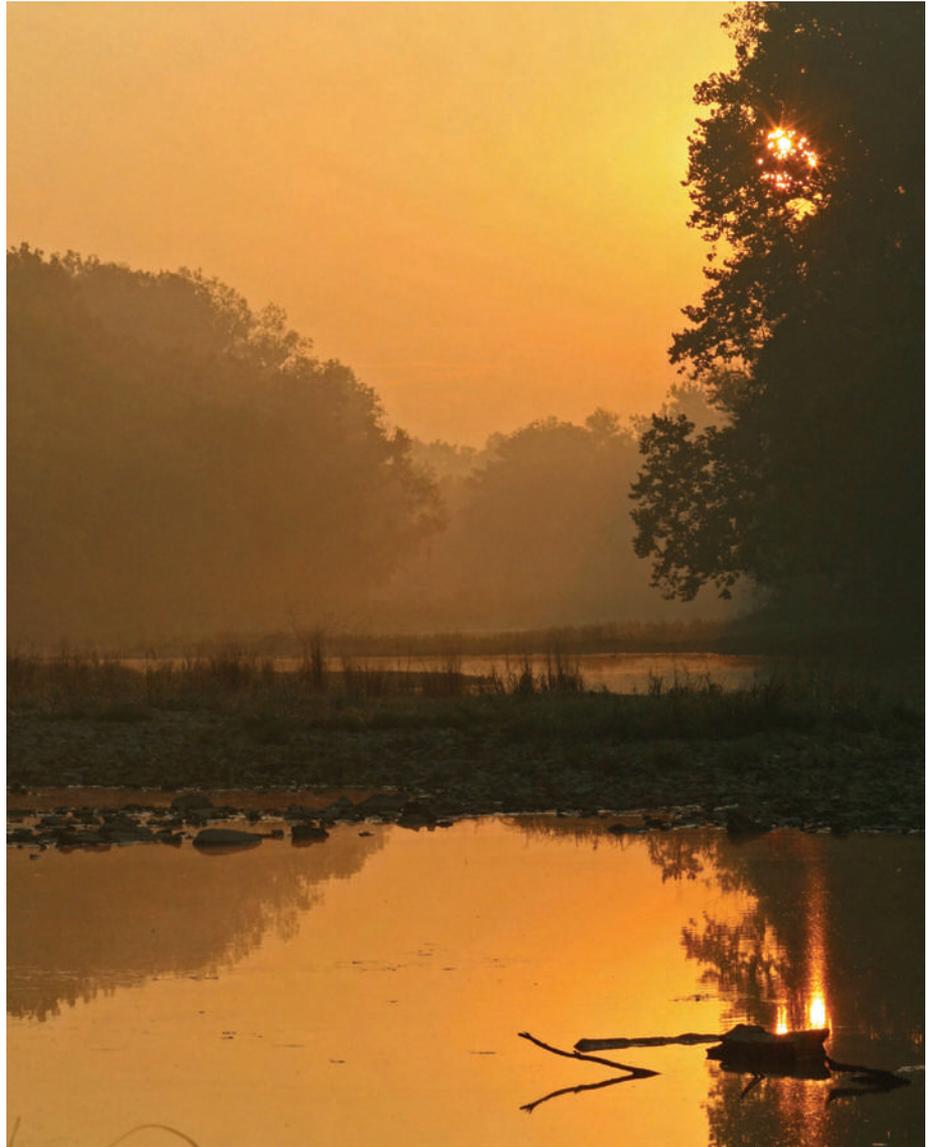
The Lathrop House, Harroun Park, Sylvania

### Greenway Trails:

Towpath Trail (Farnsworth to Providence)

University/Parks Trail

Wabash Cannonball Trail



### Partner Agencies:

Toledo Botanical Garden Board, Inc.

Nature's Nursery

Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District

Village of Whitehouse

### Stay Connected

All parks, administrative office,  
reservations: **419-407-9700**

Metroparks of the Toledo Area

5100 W. Central Ave.

Toledo, OH 43615

Websites: **MetroparksToledo.com,**

**MetroparksPrograms.com**

Facebook: **mymetroparkspage**

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